

MINUTES
ALTOONA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, March 3, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT

Randy Isenberg, Chair
James Dixon
Michael Haire, Vice Secretary
Richard Haines

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dave Albright, Vice Chair
Jennifer Mikolajczk, Secretary
Chuck Myers

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF PRESENT

Lee Slusser, Director Community Development
Nick Ardizzone, Property Manager
Mary Johnson – CDBG Manager

GUESTS PRESENT

Brian L. Durbin – Durbin Companies – Union Square, LLC
Scott Durbin – Durbin Companies – Union Square, LLC
John Sepp – Penn Terra – Union Square, LLC
William Kibler, Altoona Mirror

The Altoona City Planning Commission held its monthly meeting on March 3, 2020 in the Public Meeting Room, City Hall 1301 12th Street, Altoona. Randy Isenberg, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

1. Approval of meeting minutes of February 4, 2020.

The minutes of the February 4, 2020, were read. A motion was made by Richard Haines for approval of the minutes as corrected. Motion was seconded by James Dixon. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Public Comment Period

No Public Comment at this time.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ITEMS

- 3. UNION SQUARE TOWNHOMES** – Mr. Slusser introduced the proposed plan. Through this subdivision and land development application, Union Square Ventures, LLC, proposes to merge six parcels creating a 0.628-acre site at 2515 Seventh Avenue that stretches to Sixth Avenue and across Twenty Sixth Street.

They then propose to construct eighteen townhomes and nine apartment buildings on the site. Mr. Slusser then introduced Brian Durbin, Scott Durbin, and John Sepp who further explained the proposed plan to the Commission. The applicant seeks seven waivers from the Planning Commission with approval today. A motion was made by Jim Dixon to approve Resolution No. 03-03-20-PAC 19-0009 with the requested waivers as presented. Dick Haines seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 03-03-20-PAC19-0009
A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE UNION SQUARE VENTURES, LLC UNION
SQUARE TOWNHOMES LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

WHEREAS an application for a land development project has been filed with the Altoona City Planning Commission (hereinafter "ACPC") by Union Square Ventures, LLC (hereinafter referred to as the "DEVELOPER"); and

WHEREAS, the DEVELOPER desires to construct new townhomes at 2522-30 6TH Avenue and 2515-31 7th Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, staff has reviewed the LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN, incorporated herein by this reference and filed with the ACPC by the Developer, and has found it to be in compliance excepting waiver requests, as a FINAL LAND DEVELOPMENT with all applicable provisions of the City of Altoona's zoning, subdivision/land development, and storm water ordinances subject to the conditions of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the ACPC has determined that this LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN constitutes a FINAL LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN in full compliance with the City of Altoona's zoning, subdivision/land development, and storm water ordinances subject to the conditions of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, the ACPC has the power to APPROVE modifications to the City of Altoona's subdivision and land development requirements, and the Developer has requested the following waivers that are hereby approved by the ACPC:

1. §640-63.C(3)(a): All stalls, except for parallel parking stalls, shall be 19 feet long. A waiver is requested to use 18 foot long stalls. This dimension is adequate for today's vehicles and is a standard in most locations. Staff does not object to this waiver.
2. §640-63.C(7): Curbing shall be placed at the edges of all surfaced areas, including islands. Curbing is not provided along northeast entrance to the alley or along the

entrances to the garages which access the alleys. Providing curbing along the alley access will create issues for plowing and drainage. An existing guiderail separates the proposed access to the alley from the adjacent Pedal Power lot. Finally, providing multiple curbs along the driveways accessing the alley will be a maintenance issue for plowing and will create stormwater ponding issues given the existing grade of the alley. Staff does not object to this waiver.

3. §640-63.B(3): Parking facilities shall be set back from street right-of-way lines, property lines, and building foundations a minimum of five feet. It appears the parking off 26th Street is within 5 feet of the 7th Avenue right-of-way line. Although being treated as a pre-existing non-conformity for zoning, this does not provide a guaranteed relief from land development requirements. A waiver is requested. Staff does not object to this waiver.
4. §640-63.C(1): Facilities shall be designed so that each vehicle may enter and exit a parking space without maneuvering into a public right-of-way or pedestrian facility or without moving any other legally parking vehicle. Although being treated as a pre-existing non-conformity for zoning, this does not provide a guaranteed relief from land development requirements. A waiver is requested. Staff does not object to this waiver.
5. §640-65.A(2): Throughout the City, one tree shall be planted along the street for every 50 feet of street frontage, equidistantly if possible. Although the lot off 26th Street is being treated as a pre-existing non-conformity for zoning, this does not provide a guaranteed relief from land development requirements. A waiver is requested for the existing parking area. Placing street trees along this section will interfere with the existing parking area and is not practical given the layout. Staff does not object to this waiver.
6. §640-65.C(4): Along the parking lot, trees and shrubs shall be planted so as to screen the parking facility from all surrounding streets and properties. The city requires shrubs to be planted 3 feet on center. Although the lot off 26th Street is being treated as a pre-existing non-conformity for zoning, this does not provide a guaranteed relief from land development requirements. A four foot chain link fence with slats is now shown on the plan. The fence will screen the lot in lieu of landscaping. There is not enough space for landscaping in this area. Staff does not object to this waiver.
7. §640-65.E(1): Landscaping shall be required to provide definition and traffic control within a parking lot. Such landscaping shall be provided at the ends of all stall rows, between parking spaces and access drives which do not directly serve... Although the lot off 26th Street is being treated as a pre-existing non-conformity for zoning, this does not provide a guaranteed relief from land development requirements. A waiver is requested for the existing parking area. Placing trees at the end of the parking spaces will not provide definition of the lot since it already is an existing facility. Staff does not object to this waiver.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania, that the application and plans, as filed by the DEVELOPER, are hereby approved subject to the following conditions:

1. A letter from the Blair County Conservation District approving the plan shall be provided to the City. (Chapter 620)
2. Any necessary permits from DEP must be provided.
3. The Altoona Zoning Hearing Board appeal decision, granted on July 1, 2019 and attached hereto.
4. The ACPC Consulting Engineer's comments contained in the Engineer's letter to the City dated January 27, 2020 and attached hereto must be satisfied.
5. Financial security to cover the cost of all public improvements must be provided to the City prior to plan signature. (Chapter 640)
6. A developer's agreement prepared by the ACPC must be executed by the Developer.
7. All required signatures must be obtained on the plan.
8. The conditions of the plan must be accepted in writing by developer within 30 days of plan approval.
9. A copy of the RECORDED plan must be provided to the ACPC as soon as it is recorded.
10. All conditions must be met, fees paid, and the plan signed and recorded within the plan deadline.

RESOLVED by the Altoona City Planning Commission this third day of March, 2020

ATTEST:

Secretary

Chair

4. **Staff Level Reviews** – Staff has approved the following staff level subdivision/land development applications since the February 4, 2020 meeting.
 1. **321 5th Avenue** – Subdivision – Vincent J. Good – Under Review.

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

5. **Spot Blight Declaration**

521 8th Avenue

Owner: Angela Phillips
c/o Blair County Repository
423 Allegheny Street, Suite 143
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Property being submitted is 1/2 of a duplex – residential property and it is in substandard condition. The property exterior is in deplorable condition with the brick façade falling off on all sides of the structure. The foundation is cracked and holes are present. The roof is rotting away and windows are broken and or missing. Interior ceilings have collapsed and the floors have holes. The County is willing to assist the City with some of the costs for demolition. All utilities are off but removal dates are unknown. Under the 2015 International Property Maintenance Code, the City will demolish the structure and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. A motion to declare the property blighted was made by Richard Haines. Motion seconded by Michael Haire. Motion passed unanimously.

523 8th Avenue

Owner: Phillip Rhone
523 8th Avenue
Altoona, PA 16602

Property being submitted is 1/2 of a duplex – residential property and it is in substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. The property exterior is in deplorable condition with the brick façade falling off on all sides of the structure. The foundation is cracked and holes are present. The roof is rotting away and windows are broken and or missing. Property is filled with debris. Interior ceilings have collapsed and the floors have holes. All utilities are off. Taxes are owed for 2018 and 2019 totaling \$\$372.69. Under the 2015 International Property Maintenance Code, the City will demolish the structure and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. Motion to declare the property blighted was made by Michael Haire. Motion seconded by Richard Haines. Motion passed unanimously.

3011 Broad Avenue

Owner: Thomas White

3100 Broad Avenue

Altoona, PA 16601

Property being submitted is a residential structure in vacant substandard condition not suitable for rehabilitation. Property is in deplorable condition with wood exterior paint peeling and rotted wood in multiple areas. Roof is in an extremely dangerous condition. Shingles falling off in all areas and there is a large hole in the left front main house roof and one large hole in rear enclosed porch used as a kitchen. Interior water damage throughout structure causing rot and decay of structural embers, section of floor missing downstairs and upstairs. Upstairs flooring is unstable and warped. Holes in ceilings on stairway and upstairs bedrooms leading to the outside. Extreme hoarding conditions throughout every room. Property is structurally unsound and is a danger to nearby properties and a hazard to the community. Water has been off since 2016, but no usage for 10 years prior. Gas company stated that service has been abandoned for so long they can't provide a date. Under the 2015 International Property Maintenance Code, the City will demolish the structure and place a lien on the property for the cost of demolition. Motion to declare the property blighted was made by Jim Dixon. Motion seconded by Dick Haines. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Slusser shared some information with the Commission regarding the Christ Second Lutheran Church at 1111 7th Avenue. The building is in very poor condition and in jeopardy of falling down. Bricks are falling, there are no windows, there is a gaping hole in the roof. It needs to be razed. He doesn't think that it will come before the Commission because it could take up to six months to have it approved under the CDBG program due to the possibility of asbestos. The City Manager has said that the City will pay for the demolition which will move the process along faster. The water has been off since 2013. The owner of the building is just not able to handle the cost of the demolition.

Mr. Slusser also said that AMTRAN wants to make an amendment to the plan that the Commission approved. They would like to repair the sidewalk that exists, rather than replace it. They will be submitting an amended plan that will specify what exactly they intend to do. Mr. Slusser is asking the Commission if they would like to review that plan when it comes in or just give their ok now. After a brief discussion it was decided that the Commission does not need to do a review on this amendment. A motion was made to allow staff to approve the amendment without a review of the Commission by Jim Dixon. Motion was seconded by Dick Haines. Motion passed unanimously.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

6. **Review of Positively Altoona** – Mr. Slusser reported that he had not prepared anything for discussion today. He did mention that the new City Manager has taken a look at it and has several suggestions for objectives, one would be branding as he does not care for the City Logo and would like to see a new logo created. These are all ideas that are in the Comprehensive Plan, Signage in Historic District Signage with Historic Neighborhoods. A brief discussion ensued and Mr. Slusser said he will keep the Commission apprised.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

7. **Planning Reports**
 - a. Grantsmanship activities - Currently have applications out for projects to be awarded, waiting for feedback from the Mayor and Council. Currently consultants are working on the 5-year Consolidated Plan.
 - b. Zoning Hearing Board – No meeting this month
 - c. Shade Tree Commission – No meeting this month
 - d. GAEDC – Strategy Organization – Urban Redevelopment Area Plan requires the first two steps is to declare an area blighted and have a plan in place for reuse that will benefit the public. Once those two steps are taken the Redevelopment Authority then has the power to condemn land. At that point the Planning Commission will review and make the declaration to declare the area blighted.
 - e. Blair County Planning Commission – (No report)
8. **Commissioners Forum** – No report
9. **Questions from the Media and Public**
10. **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Jim Dixon to adjourn the meeting at 4:15 P.M. Michael Haire seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Jennifer Mikolajczk, Secretary